

## CHAPTER 3

# COMING TO MONTANA

- Why did people move to Montana?
- How did they change the state?



*People came to Montana from all over the world after gold was discovered. This print shows a crowded street in Helena in 1874.*

Today, most Montanans were born in the United States. It wasn't always that way. In 1900, one in four Montanans were born outside the United States and over half had at least one foreign-born parent.

It is hard to decide to pull up roots and move to a new land.



People needed good reasons—both to leave their homes and to go to a **specific** (exact) place. Historians call these reasons “**push-pull factors**.” Push factors include war or not being able to find a job. These bad things push people to leave their homes. Pull factors are the good things that attract people to move to a new place—like peace, jobs, and freedom.

## MONTANA’S FIRST PEOPLES

People have lived in the place we now know as Montana for at least 12,000 years. The pull factors that brought them here



*This painting, by Montana’s “Cowboy Artist” Charlie Russell, imagines successful hunters returning to camp on a cold winter day.*

included good hunting. Early **residents** (people who live in a place) of this region included the **ancestors** (family members who lived long ago) of several modern-day Montana tribes.

When Europeans started settling the eastern United States, they pushed even more tribes from their homes. Some of those tribes, like the Sioux and Northern Cheyenne, came to Montana.

Each tribe that came to Montana had (and still has) a fully developed **culture** (a shared system of behavior, attitudes, and understandings). They had (and have) **distinct** (separate) languages, clothing, celebrations, ceremonies, and family structures. The Indian tribes who still live in Montana include the Chippewa, Cree, Sioux, Salish, Pend d'Oreille, Kootenai, Blackfeet, Gros Ventre, Assiniboine, Northern Cheyenne, Crow, and Little Shell Chippewa.

## THE FUR TRADE

French, Scottish, Irish, and English fur traders started coming to this area in the mid-1700s. They came looking for beaver furs. Beaver hats were so popular in Europe that there were almost no beavers left there, so fur traders moved to America.

Like all newcomers to the country, the traders and trappers **adapted** (changed to fit new conditions) to the land and learned new ways of doing things from those people who were already



*Métis men often wore **capotes**—coats made from thick, wool, Hudson’s Bay blankets—tied with a colorful handwoven sash. They wore colorful leggings and their moccasins often were beaded with elegant designs.*



*At one time, Montana was home to many more bison than people. Today, you can only see them at a few places like the National Bison Range near Moise.*

here. Indians and European-American fur trappers and traders shared many survival techniques. Many trappers established very close relationships with the Indians, and many married Indian women. A new culture of people was created through intermarriages. They called (and still call) themselves the Métis, a French word meaning “mixed blood.”

By the late 1830s, beaver hats were no longer in style. Fur companies began to want **bison** (buffalo) hides instead of beaver **pelts** (skins). They shipped the bison hides to the East Coast. There, the bison hides were made into heavy belts, which were used to run machines in factories. In 1860, 13 million bison lived on the **Plains** (flat land). By 1883, only around 200 bison still survived.

Some United States government



leaders opposed the mass killing of the bison. Others, like General Phil Sheridan, encouraged it. General Sheridan wanted Plains Indian tribes to give up their land and their **traditional** (old) ways of life. He knew how important bison were to Plains tribes. He also knew that without the bison, tribal members would be forced to find other ways to live.

## MINING

In 1862, **prospectors** (people looking for gold) found gold on Grasshopper Creek in southwest Montana. It wasn't the first gold **strike** (discovery) in the region, but it was the biggest. Within weeks, four hundred people flocked to the creek, building the town of Bannack. The next year, prospectors found more gold in Alder Gulch. Thousands of people soon arrived to build the town of Virginia City. In 1864, there was another rich strike. This one created the town of Helena. Between 1862 and 1865, Montana mines produced more than \$90 million worth of gold.



*Working together in 1871, these Chinese miners used a sluice box to help them separate gold from the dirt and rocks.*

People came to Montana's mining camps from all over the United States and world. One push factor during the gold rush was the Civil War, which was fought between the North and South from 1861 to 1865 over slavery. Many people did not want to fight. Some of them fled to the Montana goldfields, far from the war.

Other miners came to Montana from mining communities in California (gold had been discovered there in 1848). Still others came from Germany or Ireland. In addition, many Chinese came to the Montana gold frontier. Civil war and other problems in China provided the push factors. The discovery of gold provided the pull factor.

## **SETTLERS USED THE LAND IN A NEW WAY**

The gold camps didn't just attract miners. Miners needed stores where they could buy supplies, and places to have fun. They needed restaurants, laundries, doctors, and barbershops. By the late 1870s there were over five hundred towns in Montana Territory.

The gold rush changed the way people used land in Montana. Because Indian people did not build buildings, settlers thought the land was up for grabs. Towns, ranches, farms, and mines cut Indians off from their traditional hunting grounds, and the settlers' horses and cattle ate the grass that bison depended on.



## THE WORLD NEEDS BUTTE COPPER

Gold wasn't Montana's only valuable metal. Montana was also rich in silver and copper. Copper is used for telegraph, telephone, and electrical wires. Demand for copper grew in the 1880s and 1890s as telephones became common and people began to use electricity to light their homes, schools, and businesses. Butte, Montana, had some of the richest copper mines in the world. Because of its mines, the city got the nickname the "Richest Hill on Earth."



*Underground mining was dirty, difficult, and dangerous work.*

Miners came from over thirty-five different countries to work in Butte's mines. In 1910, one out of every three people living in Butte was born outside the United States. One in twelve was born in Ireland.

## RANCHING

Montana's rich grasslands made the state perfect for raising cattle and sheep. Mining towns created a local market for beef in the 1860s. In 1883, the Northern Pacific Railroad completed its **transcontinental** (all the way across the continent) line. After that, ranchers could easily ship their cattle to the East Coast, where people were hungry for beef.



*Sheepherders relied on their dogs to help them take care of their flocks.*



Sheep ranchers came to Montana about the same time that cattle ranchers did. Many times, the same ranch raised both sheep and cattle. Both sheep and cattle ranchers relied on the free grass of the open range.

## LOGGING

Montana has lots of trees. Trees are very important. They provide homes for animals and keep soil from washing into streams. They also provide wood for building (called **timber** or **lumber**). A quarter of Montana is forest.

In early Montana, there was a huge demand for lumber.



*It took a lot of work manpower, and horse power, to **fell** (cut) trees and haul them out of the forest.*

Railroads needed it to lay railroad tracks. Mines needed it to keep the roofs from caving in. Carpenters needed it to build barns, stores, and houses.

All that building took a lot of trees. It also took a lot of people to cut down the trees, move the logs out of the forest, and then to saw the logs into boards.

## THE SHRINKING RESERVATION

Miners and ranchers who came to Montana wanted to own land. Farmers and business owners also wanted land. The railroads needed land, too. However, Indian nations had lived in Montana for thousands of years. The tribes wanted to keep their land and **resources** (useful things) for their own people.

The United States government supported the newcomers. To get land for them, they **negotiated** (discussed to come to an agreement) with the different Indian tribes to make **treaties** (agreements between nations). Sometimes the government took land away from the tribes without negotiating. Sometimes, the two sides fought with one another over the land.

Three of the seven Indian **reservations** in Montana today are lands that the tribes **reserved** (kept) for themselves during these negotiations. All of the reservations are much smaller than the tribes' traditional homelands.



## FIFTY YEARS OF CHANGES

Montana in 1900 was a very different place than it was in 1850. By 1900, Indian people could no longer rely on the buffalo for food. They also now lived on reservations that were much smaller than their traditional homelands.

Mining, ranching, and logging attracted many new people to Montana. Only about 20,000 non-Indians lived in Montana in 1870. Thirty years later, in 1900, that number was over 243,000.

The newcomers brought new ways of thinking and doing things. They wanted Montana to become a state with its own government and elected officials. In 1889, Montana became the forty-first state in the United States. (Today there are fifty states.)

The twentieth century would bring even more changes and even more people to Montana.



*This banner, carried during the Spanish-American War, became the model for the Montana State flag.*

# GLOSSARY

**Abandon** leave

**Adapted** changed to fit new conditions

**Allies** friends

**Allotment** portion

**Allotment policy** dividing Indian reservations into separate farms for each family

**Amber** yellow

**Ancestors** family members who lived long ago

**Ancient** very old

**Archaeologists** scientists who study the past by analyzing objects people have left behind

**Artifacts** objects created by people

**Assimilate/assimilation** to be absorbed into the majority culture, in this case, the white American culture

**Atlatl** a spear thrower

**Bacteriology** the study of bacteria

**Badlands** an area of rocks and hills with little vegetation created by erosion

**Band** group

**Belongings** things

**Bison** buffalo

**Capotes** coats made from thick wool blankets

**Chaps** leather leggings worn on top of pants

**Chinook** a warm wind that blows down the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains

**Claim** take for their own

**Climate** typical weather condition

**Communal** group



**Constitution** document that sets the rules for government

**Continent** one of the main areas of land on earth

**Continental Divide** a mountain ridge that separates North America and determines whether water flows east to the Atlantic Ocean or west to the Pacific Ocean

**Culture** a shared system of behavior, attitudes, and understandings; language, customs, and ideas

**Descendants** a person's children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, etc.

**Discrimination** treating a group of people unfairly

**Disease** sickness

**Distinct** separate

**Diversity** variety

**Drought** lack of rain

**Economy** businesses and jobs

**Environment** land, water, climate

**Epidemic** rapid spread of disease

**Erosion** the process by which rock or soil is gradually taken away by wind, rain, or water

**Essential** most important

**Ethnicity** place besides the U.S. people or their parents were born

**Extinct** gone

**Extinction** death of a species

**Fell** cut down trees

**Fertile** good for growing things foothills: hills at the edge of a mountain range

**Geography** where things are, the study of particular places

**Geologists** scientists who study the earth

**Geology** minerals, rocks, and soil and the study of these things

**Great Plains** the flat land region west of the Mississippi River and east of the Rocky Mountains

**Homesteader** someone who received land from the U.S. government in exchange for farming that land

**Immigrant** someone who moves to a new country to live

**Immigrate** move from one country to another

**Indian agent** a non-Indian that the government put in charge of the reservation

**Industries** types of businesses

**Leased** rented

**Lumber** wood for building

**Mechanization** using machines to replace work that people once did

**Natural resources** things found in nature and used by people

**Negotiate** discuss to come to an agreement

**Opportunities** chances or a chance for something better

**Oral histories** important stories people pass down

**Pacifist** someone who believes that problems cannot be solved by fighting

**Pelts** skins

**Plains** flat land

**Prairies** flat grasslands

**Poultry** birds raised on farms, like chickens and turkeys

**Poverty** being poor

**Precipitation** rain and snow

**Predate** come before

**Prospectors** people looking for gold or other precious metals

**Published** printed

**Pull factors** good things that make people want to move to a new place

**Push factors** things that make people want to leave their homes



**Push-pull factors** things that influence immigration (that push you out of your home country and pull you to another place)

**Reserved** kept

**Reservation** an area of land that a tribe or tribes reserved (kept) for their own use

**Residents** people who live in a place

**Resilience** strength

**Resources** useful things

**Resourceful** (good at figuring things out)

**Sovereign** self-governing

**Sovereignty** self-rule

**Spacious** large

**Specific** exact

**Strike** gold discover

**Suffrage activist** someone working to win women the right to vote

**Suffrage** vote

**Surplus** extra

**Taxes** money people pay the government so the government can provide services

**Timber** wood for building

**Time immemorial** as long as anyone can remember

**Toxic** poisonous

**Traditional** old

**Transcontinental** all the way across the continent

**Transport** move

**Treasurer** the person who keeps track of an organization's money

**Treaty** agreement between nations

**Unique** not the same as any other

# IMAGE CREDITS

To Come